

Anxiety

Wash Away Worries

Adults often look at the life of a child and think, “Children don’t have a job, a marriage, or dependents to take care of. They have no responsibility. They play and have their needs met. Ah, the easy life.” We are even quick to remind children, “Wait until you are in the real world, then you’ll know how hard it really is!” The truth is, though, children do live in the real world—their world. And a child is faced with any number of anxieties on a daily basis. This ceremony allows children to express their worries in the presence and safety of a caring adult and then have a moment to ceremonially “wash them away” and call on the Holy Spirit to carry them.

Designed for Ages 4+

Materials

1. Chalk
2. Bucket with sponges, or a garden hose
3. Sidewalk or driveway (see variations for options for apartment/condo dwellers)

Time Investment: 10–30 minutes

How To

1. When your child or teen comes to you with concern or worries, ask if he or she would like to do an exercise with you in which you “wash your worries away together.” If the child says yes, grab your chalk and head outside!
2. Tell your child that you’ll take some time to draw (or write) your worries out on the driveway together. It’s important that the adult do this activity with the child so that the child doesn’t feel singled out because of her worry. Tell your child that at the end she will

have the opportunity to explain her drawing or words, but that she doesn't have to if she doesn't want to.

3. At the end of the drawing time, ask your child to explain his drawing or worry if he would like. Model this by sharing some of your worries.

4. Together, fill a bucket with water and find sponges, or get out the garden hose.

5. Wash away your chalk drawings with the sponges or the garden hose. As you do, say, *“Holy Spirit, we give you our worries and fears. Take them away.”*

6. Conclude with a hug and a prayer:

“Holy Spirit, we have a lot of worry and anxiety. Help us to have peace and calm in our hearts. Amen.”

Notes

- I advise adults to share some, but not all, of their concerns to model to children how to be both public and private in their sharing of concerns. There are times when we want to share our worries with others, and there are times when we'd rather keep them private. Modeling that God hears all of our anxieties, even the unspoken ones, is a great relief for children.
- There is a strong temptation in this exercise for parents to either suggest solutions to these problems or to minimize the problems. Both of these instincts are born out of the desire to be genuinely helpful to the child. I encourage parents to resist the urge to do this. Perhaps during the activity you will think of some solutions you